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pregnant. To do so will make delivery more difficult. This rule is strictly observed and infraction entitles the wife to divorce with alimony. A man who breaks it will be denounced by the village as cruel and bad at heart and is likely to be suspected of sorcery, as in keeping with his general character. In addition, the husband must not cut out the septa of a bamboo to make a water bottle, or the child will have dysentery, or put a handle in an axe, which will give the child a birth mark, or hide a spade, which will give the child a hair lip.

The pregnant woman must not carry ginger root or a variety of bean with a black eye, in the front of her dress. The root will cause the child to suffer from polydactyly, the beans will make it have black spots on its skin. These taboos appear to be common to all the Tanala Menabe, but there are no doubt a number of others peculiar to various gentes.

BIRTH

Among the Tanala Menabe the mother, as soon as labor commences, goes to some vacant house in the village ward which belongs to her lineage. If there is none, she goes to her own or her father's dwelling. The doors and windows are shut and no man is allowed to enter. There are a few professional midwives, but these are only called in when delivery is difficult. Usually she is assisted by old female relatives. She removes all her clothing and kneels, grasping a stick or pendant rope. The attendants must not speak until after the afterbirth has been delivered. Then they begin to shout and clap their hands crying, "*Vita, vita!*" ("Finished!") The male relatives have gathered outside the house and when they hear this they begin to clap their hands and sing. In the old days guns could be fired.

The umbilical cord is cut very long and tied up to the child's neck with a string twisted from bark cloth. A male relative of the father takes the placenta and buries it deeply just outside and in front of the door of the birth house.

Immediately after the birth both mother and child are bathed in cold water. A deep, sloping bed of grass is piled up in the southeast corner of the house, between the fireplace and the wall. The mother is laid on this with her head and shoulders high and her legs drawn up. A large fire is built and kept up for eight days and nights. During this time the mother remains on the bed, leaving it only for natural needs. The Tanala can give no reason for this "roasting," which is a widespread Indonesian practice.

§96 The attendant women begin to cook food as soon as the child has been delivered and the mother eats if possible. Three grains of uncooked rice are placed in the child's mouth.

No special ceremony marks the end of the eight days' retirement and the couple may resume sex relations at any time after this. In this respect the Menabe differ from nearly all the other Malagasy, who have a fixed period of abstinence, varying from three to six months.

§97 Among the Tanala Ikongo the birth is always assisted by a professional midwife, called *mpanasaro*. Her services are arranged for in advance. Her fee consists of a cock or large hen and a measure of white rice, paid immediately after delivery, and a sack of paddy which the father brings to her house some days later. The umbilical cord must be cut with a bamboo knife, *sakilombo*. The placenta is buried outside the village, and the man who carries it away must always look straight ahead, or the child will squint. The mother remains on the "roasting" bed seven instead of eight days. During this time she carries a knife and a burning rag, to frighten away evil ghosts, whenever she leaves the house.

DISPOSAL OF THE UMBILICAL CORD

§98 When the umbilical cord dries up and falls from the child it is carefully preserved. Each gens appears to have its own rules for the final disposal of the cord. This is considered important and informants were reticent on the subject. In the Manandriana gens the mother keeps the cords of her children as long as both live, placing each one in a small basket. If the child predeceases the mother, the cord is buried with it. At the mother's death each child takes his cord and disposes of it as he deems best. One informant buried his at the foot of his father's memorial stone, in the sacred place of his village. A person may also take his cord and put it in a raffia palm tree. The tree then becomes taboo and while he may use it, no one else can cut raffia from it for a period of two years. At the end of this time the cord will have been destroyed by insects and weather and the taboo ends.

The Zafindriantsova gens keeps the cords for a time, then hides them in bees' nests. This method is probably used by several of the other Menabe gentes.

Most of the Tanala Ikongo gentes throw their cords into sacred rivers. On the southeast coast each gens has its sacred river into which the umbilical cords of all children must be thrown. If this

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has not been done, the child is not accounted a member of the tribe, no matter how pure its blood, and is debarred from burial in the gens tomb. Emigrant families will keep the umbilical cords of their children for years, sending them back for this rite when some member of the family returns. The Ikongo apparently do not do this and the whole rite seems to have less social implication. Probably both it and the idea of sacred rivers have been borrowed from the southeast coast in fairly recent times. 946

DESTINY OF THE CHILD

All the Malagasy have a strong belief in destiny and think that the future of an individual is indicated by the day of his birth (see *vintana*, pp. 212–214). The Tanala Ikongo believe this and put to death children born on particularly unlucky days, fearing that they will bring misfortune upon the family. The child is killed within a few hours of delivery, being buried in an ant hill or plunged head down into a jar of boiling water. Although there is strong social pressure, its destruction is optional with the parents and if it is allowed to live for two or three days it is thenceforth safe. Among the Menabe, on the other hand, the idea of lucky and unlucky birth days is still poorly developed. They claim that the *vintana* ("calendar for divination") is a recent innovation and several of my informants did not even know on what *vintana* day they were born. They say that they never put children born on unlucky days to death, and, although the practice may exist, it is certainly rare. If a child falls ill the *ombiasy* may say that the sickness is due to the child's destiny and bathe it with medicines to change this, but if the child is healthy and vigorous its birth day destiny is usually ignored. 777 847

Among the Zafakotry gens of the Menabe a child's destiny is thought to be determined by its appearance at birth. The members of this gens are normally dark. If a light-colored child is born the mother is at once suspect, but if its parentage is unquestionable, it is thought that it will grow into a malevolent sorcerer, leper or thief. Informants denied that such children would be killed, but I suspect that they are disposed of often. Another gens, the Maromena, is extremely light, hardly darker than Mediterranean Europeans, and is said to have similar beliefs regarding dark children, but I was unable to verify this. Such beliefs offer a concrete example of the way in which a society may influence the physical type of its members. 826 944 [947]

Twins seem to be very rare among the Menabe, but there is no feeling about them. Being a twin has no influence upon a person's destiny. 945